

VZCZCXRO0263
PP RUEHDE RUEHDH RUEHDIR
DE RUEHRH #1034 2240445
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 120445Z AUG 09
FM AMEMBASSY RIYADH
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1365
INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHYN/AMEMBASSY SANAA PRIORITY 1671
RUEHTRO/AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI PRIORITY 0007

C O N F I D E N T I A L RIYADH 001034

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/ARP (HARRIS), NEA/IR, NEA/MAG, NEA/PPD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/03/2010
TAGS: [ECON](#) [KPAO](#) [EINV](#) [PREL](#) [SCUL](#) [SMIG](#) [SOCI](#) [SA](#)
SUBJECT: PRINCE FAISAL BIN KHALID DISCUSSES REGIONAL
ISSUES, JURASH DIG, AND ASIR ECONOMY

REF: A. JEDDAH 228
[1](#)B. RIYADH 1021

Classified By: CDA Ambassador Richard Erdman, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) HRH Prince Faisal bin Khalid, Governor of Asir province, acknowledged security concerns about Iran, Libya, and neighboring Yemen related to his province in a meeting with Charge Ambassador Erdman in the Governor's Abha office August 1. He agreed to provide additional security forces for visiting Jurash Dig archaeologists to facilitate an expanded survey of the Asir province. The Governor expressed his hope that Post would hold another U.S. Commerce and Culture Festival in Asir province. End summary.

REGIONAL SECURITY CONCERNS AND U.S. POLICY

[1](#)2. (C) When asked about neighboring Yemen, 200 kilometers from Abha, the Governor said the province has "a lot of concerns" about the unstable country. Asir deports many Yemeni illegal immigrants, he said, but they return and sometimes stay in Asir province. He acknowledged common concerns regarding an unstable, nuclear Iran, and he said that Libya's interference in the region "affects us a lot." When asked about the Al-Houthi tribe of Shi'a in northern Yemen, the Governor claimed the group receives significant support from both Iran and Libya (ref A), but offered no details. Asked about a Saudi foreign policy expert's recent claim to the Charge that eighty percent of Saudis support Iran because of its stance towards Israel, the Governor responded wryly, "Not anymore." He said the Kingdom has a good impression of President Obama, praised the President's Cairo speech, and hoped the Obama administration would change old policies towards the Middle East.

JURASH ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIG

[1](#)3. (SBU) Charge briefed on his visit to the Jurash archaeological dig and thanked the Governor for his support of the project (ref B), and the Governor said he would welcome a brief from the Jurash team upon completion of this season's dig. In response to request conveyed by Charge on behalf of the U.S. archaeologist leading the dig, the Governor readily agreed to provide necessary security for the archaeologists doing a survey in outlying areas of Asir Province, well beyond Jurash itself. His office, he promised, would "arrange everything."

ASIR ECONOMY AND COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES

14. (SBU) When asked about his province's economy, the Governor said the agricultural sector had suffered from water shortages, particularly during the summer of 2008. He lamented that most graduates move to Riyadh and Jeddah after university due to limited work opportunities in Asir. Charge thanked the Governor for his support of the 2007 U.S. Commerce and Culture Festival, which was organized in conjunction with the Abha Chamber of Commerce, and the Governor expressed his hope that Post would organize another event in Asir.

ERDMAN